

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

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DRAFTED BY:NEA/IAI:CHILL

APPROVED BY:NEA/NVELIOTES

NEA/IAI:WBSMITH II

NEA/EGY:DZWEIFEL

S/S-O:LFLEISCHER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L S T A T E 1 4 7 7 7 8

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CORRECTION PARA 2 LINE 6 AND 8.)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, ENRG, EG, US, IS

SUBJECT: GOI OIL EXPLOITATION IN OCCUPIED TERRITORY

REF: TEL AVIV 7180

1. DURING COURSE OF WEEK, EGYPTIAN EMBASSY TWICE RAISED WITH DEPARTMENT ISSUE OF ISRAELI EXPLOITATION OF OIL FIELDS IN OCCUPIED AREAS. FIRST SECRETARY EL-KOUEDI CALLED ON NEA/IAI TO PRESENT EGYPTIAN VIEW THAT OIL EXTRACTION ACTIVITY "CASTS DOUBT ON ISRAEL'S INTENTIONS" WITH REGARD TO PEACE PROCESS. AMBASSADOR GHORBAL SUBSEQUENTLY TELEPHONED VELIOTES TO EXPRESS GRAVE CONCERN ABOUT ISRAELI ACTIONS IN ALMA FIELD. GHORBAL PARTICULARLY WANTED TO KNOW WHETHER OUR JUNE 6 DEMARCHE TO GOI WAS PRESENTED TO TOP LEVELS OF FOREIGN MINISTRY. VELIOTES ASSURED HIM THAT

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CONTACT HAD BEEN MADE "AT THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL LEVEL."

2. IN ADDITION TO DISCUSSION WITH ATHERTON REPORTED REFTEL B, ISRAELI MINISTER BAR-ON ALSO COMPLAINED TO VEIOTES ABOUT PRESS SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT ON THE POSITION ON EXPLOITATION OF SINAI OIL. IN COURSE OF RATHER SPIRITED EXCHANGE, VELIOTES NOTED:

-- NOT ALL LEGAL OPINIONS ON SUBJECT WERE "EQUAL" AS BAR-ON HAD CLAIMED; AS FAR AS US WAS CONCERNED, US LEGAL VIEW WAS CONTROLLING.

-- WE HAD CAUTIONED ISRAELIS NOT TO GO INTO PRODUCTION AT ALMA II BECAUSE WE WERE CONCERNED THAT THIS COULD ADD NEW, POTENTIALLY SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS TO ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS.

-- WE HAD JUST MADE A NEW DEMARCHE TO HIS GOVERNMENT OF WHICH HE WAS AWARE.

-- FINALLY, IT WAS UNREASONABLE NOT TO EXPECT US TO RESTATE OUR LEGAL POSITION WHEN ASKED, PARTICULARLY WHEN IT WAS ALREADY A MATTER OF PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE.

3. COMMENT: BAR-ON, OF COURSE, EXPRESSED GENERAL DIS-AGREEMENT WITH VARIOUS POINTS. EVEN ALLOWING FOR CONCERN EXPRESSED AS A RESULT OF DISTORTIONS IN AP ARTICLE, WE ARE PUZZLED BY BAR-ON'S REACTION. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE HAD RECEIVED REPORT OF EMBASSY'S DEMARCHE IN TERMS OF "PRO FORMA" DESCRIPTION AND THUS EXPECTED US TO TRY SWEEP UNDER RUG MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US ON THIS SUBJECT IN PRESS BRIEFING.

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4. IN ANY EVENT, WE ARE IMPRESSED BY SERIOUS AND COORDINATED MANNER IN WHICH GOE NOW ADDRESSING ISSUE OF ISRAELI EXPLORATION/EXPLOITATION ACTIVITIES IN SINAI AND GULF. WE WOULD APPRECIATE CAIRO'S EVALUATION OF POSSIBILITY THIS ISSUE COULD BECOME MAJOR COMPLICATION IN ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN CONTEXT IN NEAR FUTURE. VANCE

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